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ABSTRACT

This handbook translates the findings and recommendations from earlier reports on purposes and practices in selected arts and sciences majors into a practical framework for reviewing the effectiveness of major programs in the arts and sciences as liberal learning. The handbook stresses the value of assessment as a dimension of program review and suggests ways of "normalizing" assessment as an ongoing part of curricular expectations and students' learning programs. Following an introduction on the dynamics of program review, the second of the handbook's four chapters, "Key Elements of Strong Programs," discusses 13 characteristics of such programs: (1) clear and explicit goals, (2) focus on inquiry and analysis, (3) development of critical perspective, (4) connections with students' needs, (5) connections with scholarly inquiry, (6) connections within the major program, (7) connections with other disciplines and fields, (8) connections with liberal learning, (9) supportive community, (10) inclusiveness, (11) advising, (12) evaluations and assessment, and (13) administrative supports, rewards, and recognition. Chapter 3, "The Program Review Process," discusses the role of assessment and review and steps in organizing the review. Chapter 4, "A Framework for Program Review," offers a series of questions organized around the 13 key characteristics listed in Chapter 2. A selected bibliography cites 24 resources and publications. (JB)

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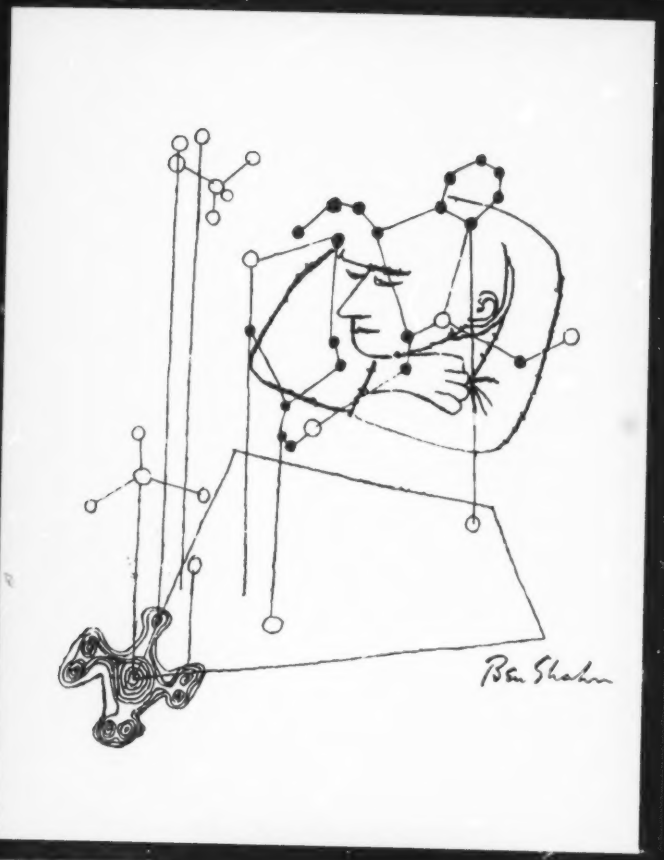
PROGRAM REVIEW AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN THE MAJOR



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LIBERAL LEARNING
AND THE
ARTS AND SCIENCES MAJOR
Volume 3

PROGRAM REVIEW AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN THE MAJOR

A FACULTY HANDBOOK

PROJECT ON LIBERAL LEARNING,
STUDY-IN-DEPTH,
AND THE ARTS AND SCIENCES MAJOR

3

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES, 1992

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"Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences Major"
Volume One, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*
Volume Two, *Reports from the Fields*
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FOREWORD

The Association of American Colleges is pleased to share with colleges and universities this new publication, *Program Review and Educational Quality in the Major*. Designed to complement standard approaches to program review, this handbook provides faculty members and academic administrators with a practical framework for examining the educational quality of major programs in arts and sciences fields.

This handbook is the third volume in AAC's series on *Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences Major*. The first two volumes in this series—*The Challenge of Connecting Learning* and *Reports from the Fields* (1991)—report on a national review of purposes and practices in selected arts and sciences majors. Conducted from 1988 through 1991 in collaboration with twelve national learned societies, AAC's national review examined campus practices in college majors and proposed ways of reconceiving majors to strengthen their effectiveness as liberal learning.

The Challenge of Connecting Learning, written by members of the National Advisory Committee for AAC's project, offers standards for liberal learning in any arts and sciences field. *Reports from the Fields* summarizes the twelve learned societies' recommendations for improving learning in particular majors.

This new handbook translates the findings and recommendations from these earlier reports into a practical framework for reviewing the effectiveness of major programs in the arts and sciences as liberal learning. It also draws on an earlier AAC project in which faculty members in fifty arts and sciences departments in eighteen colleges and universities experimented with ways of assessing students' learning across courses in arts and sciences majors. Incorporating both participant and external evaluations of that study, this handbook urges the importance of assessment as a dimension of program review and suggests ways of "normalizing" assessment as an ongoing part of curricular expectation and students' learning programs.

A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM REVIEW

The initial idea for this handbook came from faculty members and administrators who attended AAC's 1991 Annual Meeting and reviewed AAC's recommendations for strengthening liberal arts majors in the first two volumes of this series, which were released at that meeting. "If you really want faculty members to apply these recommendations," AAC members said, "link them to institutional requirements for program review. Tell us how program review should change."

Following this advice, AAC convened an ad hoc advisory group and asked John Thorpe, a member of the National Advisory Committee for AAC's earlier project, to serve as the group scribe and handbook author. Members of that ad

hoc group examined program review protocols from several different colleges and universities and several learned societies.

Few of these protocols raised searching questions about undergraduates' experience of the major. None made the quality of learning and achievement in the major a primary focus. Only one addressed connections between students' learning in the major and general education. None mentioned assessment of students' cumulative learning across courses as a dimension of program review. Only in the sciences were questions raised about students' learning in cognate subjects.

This handbook complements rather than supplants prevailing approaches to program review in arts and sciences fields. Drawing especially on *The Challenge for Connecting Learning*'s framework for liberal learning in any arts and sciences field, this handbook invites examinination of the major's success in:

- shaping inclusive and supportive learning communities
- providing coherent and well-structured frameworks for learning
- fostering critical reflection on the field's values, presuppositions, approaches, and constraints
- supporting students' integration of their learning within and beyond the major, in and out of school.

With these emphases, this handbook distills the insight gained over the past decades from a broad range of studies and experiments designed to strengthen the quality of both college programs and undergraduate learning. The importance of community as a support for learning has been documented in many studies, most visibly but not uniquely in Philip Uri Treisman's research on ways of increasing minority students' success with calculus. Similarly, integrative curricula are positively associated with college students' gains in both content knowledge and cognitive skills. In their meta-survey, *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini make this point succinctly:

> [Intellectual development] in a wide variety of areas is stimulated by academic experiences that purposefully provide for challenge and/or integration. . . . [A] curricular experience in which students are required to integrate learning from separate courses around a central theme appears to elicit greater growth in critical thinking than does the same curricular experience without the integrative requirement. (page 619)

There also is substantial evidence that formal learning is more effective and more likely to affect students' modes of thinking when it connects with their informal learning out of school. Otherwise students—even very able students—may

"play the game of school," using school learning to solve school problems while their mental models for out-of-school issues remain largely unaffected by formal instruction.

This handbook also reflects emerging wisdom from the assessment "movement." As Alexander Astin and others have noted with increasing urgency, it serves little purpose to demonstrate what students have learned or not learned unless the evaluator can connect that learning to important features of the learning environment. As program reviewers carefully observe *how* a program works—in fact as well as in design—while also studying findings from assessments of students' learning, they can offer new insights on changes likely to make a significant difference in the quality of students' liberal learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of this handbook was made possible by support from the Ford Foundation. AAC is grateful both to the Ford Foundation and to the United States Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) for their generous support of the research and national discussions distilled in this handbook. Both agencies provided substantial grants for AAC's national review of arts and sciences majors, while FIPSE also supported AAC's coordination of campus experimentation with ways of assessing learning in the major.

We are especially grateful to John Thorpe, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at the State University of New York–Buffalo, who served as scribe for this handbook and previously as a member of the National Advisory Committee for AAC's national review of liberal learning in arts and sciences majors. With elegance and lucidity, he has ably captured both the insights of the ad hoc committee that shaped this handbook and the hundreds of hours of dialogue and debate within the National Advisory Committee that resulted in AAC's *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*.

We also thank the other members of the ad hoc committee for their careful examination of program review processes and their insightful responses to early drafts of this document. They are:

- Neal Abraham, Professor of Physics, Bryn Mawr College
- Johnnella Butler, Associate Professor and Chair, American Ethnic Studies, University of Washington
- Bobby Fong, Dean of Arts and Humanities, Hope College
- Peggy Garrett, Associate Dean of the College, Dickinson College
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☐ Joanna Zangrando, Professor of American Studies, Skidmore College

We also are grateful to Lee Williams, assistant provost at the University of Scranton, and William Scott Green, dean of undergraduate studies and Phillip S. Bernstein Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Rochester, for serving as additional readers.

Our thanks are due to all those who contributed to AAC's earlier initiatives on learning in arts and sciences majors. While this handbook is brief, it is richly informed and strengthened by the wisdom of all those who participated in AAC's work on the major over the past few years.

Finally, many members of the AAC staff contributed to this project. Maureen McNulty compiled the bibliography that appears at the back of this handbook; she and Thomas Jeavons effectively served as staff for the ad hoc committee. Director of Public Information and Publications Sherry Levy-Reiner provided guidance in developing a format for the handbook, while Assistant Director of Publications David Stearman ably managed the production process.

The "ethos" of self-containment has too long left majors apart from the national dialogue about the renewal of liberal learning in baccalaureate studies. AAC is glad to provide a resource for those concerned to connect liberal learning across and beyond the college curriculum.

CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER
Executive Vice President
Association of American Colleges

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHANGING THE DYNAMICS OF PROGRAM REVIEW

Periodic program review is a common practice in most colleges and universities. For some academic programs, particularly preprofessional programs, such review is part of an accreditation process conducted by an external agency. For other programs, including most undergraduate degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences, review is initiated by campus administrators as a means of monitoring program quality and identifying problems that may require administrative action.

Often, program review in reality is a "program audit." The main focus of the review is on data: number of students, number of faculty members, student/faculty ratios, qualifications of faculty members, class size, library holdings, scores of seniors on standardized tests such as the Graduate Record Examination, percentage of students who are admitted to graduate school, percentage of students who are employed within a fixed period after graduation, percentage of classes taught by graduate students or by adjunct faculty members, percentages of women and minorities on the faculty and among the students.

Important though these data may be, they are not sufficient to capture adequately the educational quality of a program. To assess educational quality, one must examine curricular and pedagogical issues—issues that are tied more to intentions, instructional practices, faculty/student interactions, and learning outcomes than to data. From this perspective, *the goal of a program review should be to increase the self-consciousness of faculty members and administrators about their educational practices so they can improve the quality of teaching and learning.*

This handbook is intended for those who wish to initiate a program review focused on educational quality. Although a "program audit" type of review could be combined with the type of review advocated here, supplementary questions eliciting those data either can be constructed easily by anyone who wishes to include them or adapted from one of many available prototypes. Therefore, "audit" questions will not be included here.

The quality of education review, for which guidelines are provided here, is consistent with the national movement toward outcomes assessment. In the

end, one cannot truly determine the quality of a program without understanding its effects on students. Thus, a program review that focuses on quality of education depends on a clear specification of desired educational outcomes and carefully gathered evidence that these outcomes are being achieved. A variety of possible approaches to gathering such evidence are included in this handbook.

The guidelines for program review provided here address "majors"—programs of concentrated study that in most institutions constitute the intellectual center for students' undergraduate learning. The guidelines reflect the findings of a national review of arts and sciences majors that the Association of American Colleges conducted from 1988 to 1991. The recommendations from that review are contained in the first two volumes of AAC's report on Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences Major. The program review guidelines presented here as Volume Three draw especially on Volume One of that report, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*, which provides organizing principles for liberal learning in any arts and sciences field.

The guidelines presented here also reflect the conclusions of an earlier AAC project, Using External Examiners to Assess Student Learning in the Major. Participants in that project recommended that program reviews begin to incorporate findings from assessment of student learning. They also recommended that program review, which typically invites scrutiny from faculty members external to the program (and often to the institution) ask such external examiners to review direct examples of students' learning across the major as part of their overall review of program quality. Suggestions for linking assessment to periodic program review are presented in this handbook.

The second chapter of this handbook presents a philosophical framework for program review. It is followed in Chapter Three by suggestions for specific procedures that may be utilized in organizing a program review process. Chapter Four presents questions to be asked in a program review process that is concerned primarily with the educational quality of learning in the major.

CHAPTER TWO

KEY ELEMENTS OF STRONG PROGRAMS

AAC's 1991 report, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*, advocates viewing undergraduate degree programs—programs of concentrated study or academic majors—from a strongly learner-oriented perspective, paying special attention to the needs and expectations of students. This is not to say that students should determine the content of programs—that must be a faculty responsibility—but rather that faculty members, as they design, implement, and review programs, should be sensitive to the students served by the program. This sensitivity cannot be left to one or two faculty members who have a particular interest in undergraduate students; it must be shared by all who teach in the program. The following thirteen characteristics of strong programs, articulated in *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*, provide the underlying philosophy that guides AAC's approach to program review.

1. CLEAR AND EXPLICIT GOALS

> *It is not enough for deliberations about the major to be exercises at the blackboard diagramming curricula that "look right" but have little effect either on course practices or on student experience of the major. Faculty members' deliberations about majors as educational programs need to become part of a continuing collegial dialogue about the relationship between faculty intentions and student progress.*
>
> THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, PAGE 21

Strong programs articulate clear goals for students' learning, which are made explicit and understandable to the students. These goals should include clear expectations about the purposes and character of introductory, middle-level, and culminating work; the nature of and rationale for program requirements; and the rationale for curricular structures as they relate to these goals.

Faculty members in each program must accept corporate responsibility for the program's goals and curriculum. The faculty as a body periodically should review the program's goals, the extent to which they are realized, and their relation to the goals and structures of general education. Ideally, the faculty will consider

thoughtfully, and explain carefully to students, how the articulated goals for learning (and curricular structure) in the program relate to the overarching goals for students' learning in the institution as a whole, including general education.

2. A FOCUS ON INQUIRY AND ANALYSIS

The problem with the major is not that it has failed to deliver certain kinds of knowledge. The problem is that it often delivers too much knowledge with too little attention to how that knowledge is being created, what methods and modes of inquiry are employed in its creation, what presuppositions inform it, and what entailments flow from its particular ways of knowing....

Students have the right to expect their major to provide a set of learning experiences that will teach them how to use their field's approaches in pursuing significant questions.... They have the right to expect learning experiences that will encourage them to shape, reflect on, add to, and use the knowledge they are gaining.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 6–7

Strong programs help students develop the capacity to use the methods and perspectives of the discipline(s) in framing questions and in developing increasingly sophisticated analyses of those questions. Recognizing that these capacities develop over time, these programs create curricular structures that provide students with opportunities to revisit issues that they have met in prior courses and to bring to bear on those issues increasingly powerful analytic techniques.

3. DEVELOPING CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

[Students] have the right to expect opportunities for translating and negotiating among different approaches and for exploring the strengths and limitations of the lenses through which they have learned to view issues and problems.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 7

Students join the community of the major briefly; ultimately, they must disengage and leave. An essential step in this process of disengagement is the achievement of some measure of critical distance. Part of the articulated purpose of the major, therefore, is to prepare a student to be sufficiently confident in the discourse of a community to subject the major to sophisticated questions and to compare and connect its proposals with the proposals of other communities.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 12

Strong programs help students understand the limitations of a particular field's methods or perspectives by providing opportunities for students to consider the values, biases, and internal conflicts of the field and to examine the ways in which the field may be inadequate (at least on its own) for dealing with some kinds of questions. In some fields, this may require that faculty members engage in more self-conscious analysis of their discipline than they are accustomed to doing.

Strong programs help students learn about the variety of views and perspectives represented within each field. Engaging students in open discussion of questions and conflicts about the presuppositions, methods, and findings of the field represents a powerful teaching technique that fosters intellectual development.

4. CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS' NEEDS

> *Faculty members often think of the major as a study of a subject valuable in itself, or as a preparation for advanced, postbaccalaureate studies (with the desire that the best students themselves should enter the professoriat). Students often speak of attaining usable capacities, of the "real world" value of collegiate education. The fact is that most students do not go to graduate school and a career in the learned professions, nor do they use the content of their major directly in their careers.*
>
> THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 3

Programs must acknowledge and respect the perceptions and expectations of students who choose to pursue a particular course of study. This implies that the faculty must be aware of the characteristics of the student body. What are the students' backgrounds, both academic and experiential? What are their aspirations? What do they believe about the value of a college education and about the role of the program in that education? What questions and concerns about the field are of greatest personal interest to them?

Students change; society changes; career opportunities change. Strong programs are dynamic, not static. Faculty members in strong programs actively and regularly seek to learn about their students and respond appropriately to their changing needs. Sometimes the program, or parts of it, must be reformed. Sometimes, extra efforts must be directed to helping students understand more fully the goals of the program as conceived by the faculty. Sometimes, faculty members must articulate the program more carefully to counteract—beforehand—misplaced student assumptions. Always, keen faculty awareness of student perspectives and willingness to rethink their own convictions in the light of new understandings about students are necessary prerequisites to a healthy program.

5. CONNECTING WITH SCHOLARLY INQUIRY

[There is] a marked disparity between the ways academics do their research and the institutional structures that organize curricula and teaching.... What are needed are incentives and structures to ensure that the intellectual excitement of discovery, interaction, and critical discourse that many faculty members experience also is available to students.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 15

Strong programs reflect the current state of scholarly understanding. As advances are made in the field, they should impact on the curriculum. As new ideas emerge for organizing and communicating knowledge in the discipline, they should influence the structure and pedagogy of the program. As new issues and controversies arise that relate to the content of the program, they should be brought into the classroom.

Faculty members must be active in the field if they are to design and teach a relevant and vital curriculum. They must be well qualified initially, and they must maintain an active regimen of scholarship. Some will be researchers or creative artists. Others may focus on interpretive, expository, or teaching and learning issues. All, however, must belong to the community of scholars: learning, exploring issues within a collegial community, and sharing new understandings with students. All should have explicitly stated personal goals for professional development and scholarship and for improvement as teachers. Moreover, just as program quality should be reviewed periodically, so should each faculty member's progress toward his or her stated goals be reviewed regularly by peers.

6. CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE MAJOR PROGRAM

Majors... require faculty members' willingness to develop a shared understanding of what study in the major is supposed to accomplish and faculty members' collaboration in designing a coherent program of study sufficient to accomplish it.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 7

The program should be organized around a careful plan that views it as a coherent whole rather than as simply a collection of courses. In some programs, coherence is achieved partially through prerequisite structures. In others, it is achieved partially through increasing specialization or methodological sophistication. The need for establishing connections goes beyond either of these, however. A strong program will include opportunities for synthesis and integration across courses—perhaps through junior or senior seminars, a capstone course, or a senior thesis.

Faculty members must be willing to accept responsibility for the entire pro-

gram—not just for their own courses. They must work collaboratively to ensure that connections among courses are visible to students. This can happen only if faculty members know what their colleagues are teaching and how their own courses fit within the context of the program.

7. CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER DISCIPLINES AND FIELDS

To fulfill its role in liberal learning, the major also must structure conversations with the other cultures represented in the academy, conversations that more nearly reflect the diversities within our world and require patient labors of translation. Ultimately, the goal of the major should be the development of students' capacities for making connections and for generating their own translations and syntheses.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 5

At its best, the traditional major has offered a curriculum designed to convey what is central to a given discipline or area of study. But the synthesizing enterprise—the bringing of what one has learned in one context to another, from one community to another—has been left almost entirely to students' private initiative. It ought to take place in public, accredited, curricular space.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 15

Strong programs help students see and appreciate the connections with other disciplines that faculty members may take for granted. Such seeing and appreciating can be accomplished through interdisciplinary courses, seminars, or projects; through course requirements outside the major department; or, perhaps best, through a continual effort by faculty members to examine in their own courses insights into, examples from, and applications to other fields.

8. CONNECTIONS WITH LIBERAL LEARNING

[T]he traditional distinctions between general education and the major no longer can be sustained.... [T]he work of the major needs to open into a larger context of learning in order to develop the fullness of perspective that the discrete disciplines and fields of study cannot help but obscure.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 5

Strong programs acknowledge and teach connections between issues of their field and issues of wider academic and "real-world" concern. Every practitioner in every field regularly encounters political, societal, and ethical issues related to

the field. Attention to these issues should not be confined to general-education courses. Students must grapple with some of these issues within the context of the major. Students also need opportunities to explore the connections between the various topics and issues in the field and their own interests and concerns.

Each program must accept responsibility for a role in the general education of its students. Strong programs may require, for example, a course on ethics in the discipline, a seminar that examines case studies of major advances in the field and includes attention to the broad issues associated with those advances, or an independent study course that permits the student to explore in depth some topic in the field that is personally meaningful. They may create capstone courses that encourage topical connections across fields.

9. SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Faculty members must take seriously what students believe about a given subject and engage their prior knowledge so that new learning restructures the old, complicating and correcting it rather than merely living side by side with it.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 13

Strong programs provide practical support and encouragement for students' intellectual growth and development. This includes providing frequent opportunities for interaction and dialogue among students, and between students and faculty members, in addition to that which occurs in the classroom.

The faculty members in a program must take a special interest in the intellectual development of the students in the program. This responsibility can be met only when faculty members recognize that intellectual development is a social as well as an individual process. Program faculty members must provide frequent occasions that enable students to engage with others in a collaborative exploration of knowledge and inquiry in the field of study. Faculty members must be concerned with the many factors that affect students' lives as learners, and they must try to provide an environment in which learning is as natural, stimulating, and fulfilling as possible.

10. INCLUSIVENESS

Redressing imbalances [among students due to age, ethnicity, economic background, gender, and race] cannot be left to the admissions office or to an institution's promising collaboration with the local public schools. Faculty members in each program must explore what obstacles their fields present to the participation of discrete groups of underrepresented students

and make a strong commitment to eliminating those obstacles.

The problem of full participation in arts and sciences majors no longer can be framed in terms of access alone; what is needed is a reformation of present practices.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 17

Those responsible for strong programs are aware of the demographic shifts in representation of minorities and women in the workplace and the benefits to their department of seeking to serve students with diverse characteristics and backgrounds. They work actively to find ways to attract and retain students of all types and backgrounds, including those who have been discouraged from participating in the field due to stereotyping and bias.

Faculty members in strong programs work to improve access to and persistence in the program among groups that are underrepresented in the field. They approach this work with the recognition that focusing on the diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and concerns of new groups of students will result in improved learning experiences and educational quality for all students in the program.

Those responsible for strong programs are alert to the possibility that implicit and unintended messages may be communicated that suggest to students that they are not welcome. They structure introductory courses to acknowledge and respect the goals, perspectives, learning styles, and experiences of all the students in those courses. They take particular care not to use introductory courses as filters that discourage students who in fact have potential for success in the field.

Strong programs provide multiple points of entry. These points of entry may include programs for precollege students that encourage them to enter the field, programs for first-year students whose academic records indicate they are capable of success in the field in spite of stereotypes that may have discouraged them, and courses—or versions of courses—that acknowledge the differing preparations and interests of students.

Strong programs acquaint students and potential students, through orientations or units in first-year courses, with the culture of the field and work actively to make them feel at home. Strong programs actively seek to recruit a diverse faculty that represents the scholarly attainment of traditionally underrepresented groups.

Faculty members and administrators in strong programs seek alliances with ethnic and gender studies programs, such as American ethnic studies and women's studies, to offer joint courses or programs on the history and contributions of these groups to particular fields. They participate in seminars to acquaint themselves with new scholarship. Where appropriate, they incorporate knowledge gathered from these kinds of alliances and inquiries into their own courses

and programs. They also acquaint themselves with the nature of racial, ethnic, and sexual harassment and with inadvertent biases that may manifest themselves in teaching.

11. ADVISING

Careful advising is... necessary, not only to assure that the requisite number of courses are taken but also to support a continuing discussion about the program's purposes and students' experiences.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 11

Advising students is a faculty responsibility. Advising should begin as soon as a student shows a potential interest in the program, and it should continue through graduation. High-quality advising includes sharing information on the goals and expectations of the program; helping students devise purposeful and coherent plans for study; discussing the culture of, and opportunities in, the field; exploring the aspirations and interests of the student; discussing employment opportunities in the field; and assisting students in the selection of graduate schools.

Throughout the process, advising should help the student successfully "negotiate the system," ensuring that the college experience is as smooth and productive as possible. High-quality advising includes encouraging and supporting student activities outside the formal curriculum, such as academic clubs, student seminars, and interest groups, as well as the traditional one-on-one faculty/student consultations.

12. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

[S]tudents have the right to expect that all of the capacities and knowledge they have gained will be assessed, by faculty members, through carefully designed occasions that challenge them to integrate and demonstrate their learning across their specific programs of study.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 7

Strong programs incorporate occasions for assessing student learning that transcend individual courses, for marking educational milestones in the program, and for evaluating cumulative learning. This kind of assessment is essential if faculty members truly are to know how effective their instruction is and how well the goals of the program are being met. Thoughtfully and carefully done, such evaluation also can enhance the process of helping students to make connections: connections between courses in the program, connections with other fields of study, and connections with their own personal experiences and interests.

Although faculty members initially often are suspicious of—and resistant to—assessment, the benefits of assessment usually are recognized quickly by faculty members who engage in assessment activities. Assessment allows faculty members to identify what they are doing right—what works well and what succeeds in involving students more actively in the field. The results of assessment allow faculty members to streamline their work, abandoning classroom practices and activities that do not significantly enhance learning.

Outcomes assessment is a necessary part of program review. Analysis of input alone (design of the curriculum, number and qualifications of faculty members, class size, quality of classrooms and laboratories, library holdings, and so on) cannot yield information on the effectiveness of programs.

13. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, REWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

This report...asks for collective and collaborative faculty discussions about ways of translating these common commitments into institutional practices and structures. This translation must begin with time and space.... [I]t must be supported by visible and concrete rewards....
THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 21

Any program's faculty members will be committed to a diverse set of activities including teaching, scholarship, course and curriculum development, advising, evaluation, and assessment. The quality of the program depends on strength in all of these areas. This does not mean that every faculty member in the program personally must be committed to excellence in each of these areas. It does mean, however, that all faculty members must acknowledge the importance of each of these areas; that for each area there are faculty members in the program who devote significant time and energy to the area; and that excellence is recognized, appreciated, and rewarded.

Strong programs have clearly articulated policies for supporting and rewarding all of these types of activities. Rewards include salary increases, substantial weight in promotion and tenure decisions, and awards in recognition of excellence. Administrative support includes funds for curriculum development and faculty development (for example, workshops and consultations); for research and scholarly pursuits; for course and teacher evaluation; for assessment; and for travel to meetings and conferences that deal with teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as scholarship in the field.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

In a very real sense, program review is (or should be) a continuous process. Thoughtful faculty members, as they teach and advise students, constantly reflect on the effectiveness of what they are doing and on the implications for their courses of what they are learning from their students. Ideally, they also reflect on the implications for the program as a whole and share those reflections with other faculty members in faculty meetings or perhaps a faculty retreat. The result is continual fine-tuning of courses and modification of the program whenever the evidence suggests such modification is needed.

Periodically, however, a more structured review is necessary. These structured reviews should occur at regular intervals, not simply occasionally in response to a "crisis" perceived by a chair or dean. Although the stated purpose of the review may vary—to inform external constituencies about the quality of the program, to focus attention on aspects of the program that need attention, or perhaps to justify a request for additional resources—the ultimate goal of a program review should be to examine the extent to which the educational goals of the program are still appropriate and are being achieved satisfactorily. Almost inevitably, a structured program review will result in some (possibly minor, sometimes major) changes in the program. The ultimate goal of any program review should be improving the program.

The frequency of structured program review also will vary greatly across institutions and across programs. Typically, structured program reviews occur approximately once every five to seven years, although special circumstances (for example, a program in transition, a program on "probation," or an intervening accreditation review) may indicate the need for a review after fewer than five or more than seven years.

The most useful program reviews are based on evidence that is collected on an ongoing basis, not just assembled immediately prior to the review. Continual evidence gathering is important to ensure the availability of the necessary kinds of evidence, the robustness of data, and the ability to analyze trends. It also acts

as a reminder of the importance of staying alert to factors that affect program quality.

Program review always invites feedback from reviewers outside the immediate program. Usually, these external reviewers will include colleagues from other institutions. External perspective is an important dimension of program review. It challenges faculty members to reconsider their programs in relation to practices at other institutions and it connects their work with a larger community of dialogue and debate.

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM REVIEW

A key ingredient in successful program review is the quality of evidence documenting the educational outcomes of the program. This evidence should assess the quality of student learning. It should be aggregate, focusing on the program and not on individual students or courses. It should be derived from multiple assessment strategies; no one approach can provide adequate information.

Assessment should focus on students' growth from the time they enter the program through their graduation from it. It should provide evidence of the kinds of work students are attempting, their increasing capacity to synthesize and integrate knowledge from different parts of their program, and their ability to use the approaches of their field in framing and analyzing problems and issues. It should provide evidence of the ways they are using their studies and not just evidence of their knowledge of specific information. To serve the purpose of program review, assessment need not include information on every student in the program; information from representative samples is sufficient. If the program has many transfer students, the assessment should provide evidence of how transfer students as a group are adapting to the program's goals and expectations.

Although assessment for program review requires only periodic sampling of students' learning, such assessment is most informative when it is grounded in course and program requirements. Many campuses find that students do not do their best work when assessment is extracurricular and has no consequences for them. Similarly, faculty members may not value evidence developed only for the periodic program review. They may view the evidence as irrelevant because they do not know and trust the measures. When assessment is embedded in the regular curriculum, faculty members are better able to interpret the results and use them for program improvement.

The best assessment strategies provide learning experiences for students as well as evidence for program review. Assessment can be embedded in courses by including common questions on examinations in several courses in the program. Assessment can provide advising experiences for students through "rising junior" exams that assess learning outcomes through the junior year and provide

information to guide study during the senior year. Assessment can help students recognize and appreciate their own growth in the program through portfolios or self-assessment essays. Assessment can be structured as a series of assignments in a course—or set of courses—that allow students to try again if their performance is below expectations. Assessment can provide integrative experiences through senior projects.

Program reviews also can incorporate assessment by external examiners. Qualified persons in the external program review group can explore, in oral interviews, the extent to which students have appropriated concepts, approaches, and knowledge in their field. They can evaluate how well students can synthesize or draw upon this learning in addressing new issues or problems. Such external reviews are most effective when the examiners base their questions on students' written work—for example, in a comprehensive examination, a senior project, or in a series of course papers. The results should be summarized in a written report to the program faculty members. When students present their work to external examiners, the review process also should include feedback to the students themselves.

Other assessment strategies may include pre- and post-testing (testing at program entry and retesting at program completion), surveys of graduating seniors and of alumni/ae, exit interviews, analysis of alumni placement, tracking of alumni, standardized tests, and transcript analyses.

ORGANIZING THE PROGRAM REVIEW

The first step in a structured program review usually is a self-study. This self-study should produce a report that reviews educational goals and rationales for the program, summarizes conclusions of the previous program review, describes changes in the program since the previous review, provides evidence indicating the extent to which program goals are met, identifies critical problems facing the program, and includes short- and long-range plans and recommendations.

The preparation of the self-study report usually is guided by a set of questions that focus attention on issues considered important by the faculty and administration. A set of possible questions is provided in the next section of this handbook. The self-study report should reflect the corporate judgment of program faculty members and, ideally, will be the result of a collegial effort that involves the entire program faculty.

A second step in most program reviews is an analysis of the self-study by a group external to the program. This group may include faculty members from other programs in the same institution, faculty members from similar programs at other institutions, alumni, students, members of advisory boards, administrators, or any combination of the above. This group studies the report; reviews

course syllabi, final examinations, transcripts of recent graduates, and assessment findings; interviews faculty members, students, and administrators associated with the program; and requests any additional information deemed necessary. Members of the group also may conduct oral interviews with students about their work and experience in the program. Using this information, the group prepares its own report, which comments on the quality of the self-study as well as on the plans and recommendations contained therein. This group also will add its own recommendations.

The final step in the program review process is the institutional and program response, which provides an occasion for constructive dialogue between program faculty members and the responsible dean, as well as an opportunity for program faculty members to revisit the analysis contained in the self-study. The main focus of these discussions should be on educational quality and should return once more to the basic questions: What are the educational goals? How well are they being achieved? What changes should be made in light of the review findings? A follow-up session with the dean should take place after an appropriate interval to discuss any changes that have occurred as a result of the program review.

Program review, done well, is more than simply an activity carried out from time to time in response to a periodic need for information about the health of a program. Program review should be a continual process: of goal identification and review, of faculty conversation about teaching and learning strategies, of assessment and revision. The formal evaluation, which includes the self-study and the report of the external review committee, should be simply a signpost in that process, showing the results of prior assessment activities and pointing the way to a continuation of these activities in the years ahead.

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CHAPTER FOUR

A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM REVIEW

An efficient and effective program review must be guided by questions that call attention to important issues and suggest standards, and whose answers can provide a basis for evaluation. The set of questions that guides a program review must be tailored to campus goals and priorities. No single set will be appropriate for all campuses or even for all programs on a single campus. Nevertheless, although one can expect considerable variation, most program reviews will need to deal with similar basic issues that reflect areas of common concern. The questions provided here offer a model for campuses to use in constructing their own guidelines for program review. Admittedly and unapologetically, they reflect the views about strong programs of concentrated learning articulated in *The Challenge of Connecting Learning* and summarized in Chapter Two of this handbook.

The questions are grouped in categories. We recommend that each campus add one or two additional categories to the list—categories that deal with local concerns—and that the specific questions suggested here be reviewed carefully and modified as necessary to reflect campus priorities.

GOALS

> *[Faculty members must attempt] to provide a local structure for a course of study in a major that can specify its goals, ensure that these goals are communicated to students and faculty members alike, and assess the degree to which these aims are achieved.*
>
> THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 7

Prior to any assessment activity there must be an identification of goals and expected outcomes. In a strong program, these will be articulated prior to program implementation. They will be under review continually and, from time to time, under revision.

- What are the educational goals of the program?
- How were these goals determined?

Are all faculty members in the program aware of the goals, and do they understand how their own courses are intended to contribute to achieving these goals?

How are the goals of the program communicated to students?

Is there clear evidence that the goals of the program are being met?

- Are the goals of the program appropriate for the blend of faculty members and students that are in the program?

How do the goals of the program compare with the goals of similar programs at other institutions?

Are program faculty members aware of the characteristics of exemplary programs at other institutions?

- What are the intended outcomes of the program?

Are these outcomes stated in terms that permit judgments about the extent to which they are realized?

What procedures are in place for collecting and analyzing evidence that enables such judgments to be made?

Does this evidence show that the intended outcomes are achieved?

- How does the program monitor its progress toward achieving its goals?

Are faculty members involved in this process?

Are occasions provided for sharing the results with all faculty members?

- What are the major changes occurring in similar programs in other institutions?

How does the faculty learn about these changes?

How does the faculty assess which of these changes to implement locally?

- What process is used for regularly reviewing goals, courses, and curricular structures in light of the findings of assessment activities?

Is this a corporate process that involves all faculty members in the program or at least a broadly representative cross-section of the faculty?

What have been the results of these processes since the previous program review?

- What modifications have been made recently in the goals or in the program?

Have these modifications resulted in documented improvements?

Are there problems that have not been addressed?

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

[F]aculty members [must] concern themselves not just with course requirements but with the ways that a major's parts and practices contribute to its larger purposes.... The chosen mode of organization... ought to be the result of deliberate and corporate faculty judgment.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 7–8

In a strong program, required courses and constrained electives fit together in a coherent whole. The organization of the program will vary from field to field and, perhaps, from institution to institution. For all programs, however, the organizing principles and coherence of the curricular plan should be evident to students and faculty members alike. Faculty members should possess a shared understanding of the differences between introductory, intermediate, and culminating work in the program. Their courses and assignments should reflect this shared understanding.

- What is the plan for the curriculum and how was it determined?
  - Is it based on a well-defined intellectual agenda?
  - Is the plan understood by all faculty members teaching courses in the program?
  - Is it understood by students?
  - Is it reflected in course rationales, syllabi, and assignments?
- Does the program begin with survey courses or with more specialized introductions to the field?
  - What is the rationale for this choice?
  - Do the beginning courses serve both majors and nonmajors?
  - If so, is there evidence that they serve both constituencies well?
- Is there structure in the middle range of courses?
  - What are the organizing principles?
  - Do these courses build significantly on the introductory courses?
  - Do they acknowledge and utilize the learning that is occurring in other middle-range courses?
- Do the middle-range courses include attention to connections with other fields and with the learning that is occurring in the other parts of the curriculum (for example, in general-education courses)?
  - Do they allow time and space for reflecting, synthesizing, and generalizing?
- Are students introduced early to the modes of inquiry and methodology of the discipline?
  - Are these modes and methods then utilized in assignments for subsequent courses?
  - Do students exit the program with a demonstrated ability to apply the approaches of the discipline to formulate and analyze new questions, conjectures, and proposals?
- Do beginning or middle-range courses introduce students to the contested issues of the field and provide students the opportunity to engage actively with these issues?
  - Do students understand both the strengths and the limitations of the methodology and perspectives of the field?

Do they exit the program with some measure of critical distance from the field?

- Is there a common core of courses taken by all students in the program?

If not, is there an alternate academic structure that stimulates the development of an intellectual community among the students?

- Is there a capstone experience (for example, a senior seminar, a senior project, a thesis, comprehensive examinations) that provides students with an opportunity to integrate the learning that has occurred throughout their college experience?

Does this capstone experience integrate courses external to the program—including courses in general education—as well as courses within it?

Does it challenge students to grapple with some of the ethical, political, and societal issues associated with the field?

- What characteristics of the program are evident from an analysis of student transcripts?

Is the intended structure of the program realized?

Is it effective in supporting the educational goals of the program?

Has the structure been reviewed or modified recently?

Does it need modification?

CONNECTIONS

[F]ostering capacities for reflection on what happens beyond the academy must be the larger goal. The discourse of the academy is but a means to an end, a developmental step along a path that appropriately points students toward a multitude of contexts and circumstances.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 14

It is... important for [students] to care about subject matter and see its implications for the ways they live their lives. At issue is whether students can connect a field's subject matter and approaches with a variety of pursuits important to them, and whether their curiosity and concerns beyond the classroom can be deepened or shaped by the insights the field brings forth. This requires teaching and opportunities for reflection that encourage students to test the assumptions and proposals of the field against questions and evidence drawn from their own experience.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 16

Strong programs are designed to facilitate connections: with the most recent advances in the field, with the practice of the field in life beyond the academy, with applications to other fields, with liberal learning, and—most important from students' perspectives—with the needs and lives of students. Inattention to these

connections will lead to an insularity that is certain to result in a loss of vitality for the program.

- How important are these connections among the stated goals of the program?

  To what extent are connections explicitly addressed in the curricular structure?

  Is there evidence that students are making connections as they progress through the program?

  As they exit the program?

- What are the modes of scholarship in which the program's faculty members actively are engaged?

  Is there a good representation of differing modes of scholarship among the program faculty members?

  Are all faculty members active?

  Do they bring into the classroom the excitement as well as the results of recent work in the field?

  Do they regularly revise their courses to include the latest results, debates, and open questions?

- Do experiences provided in the program connect with the principal career options available to graduates of the program?

  Are there opportunities for internships or summer employment?

- Do faculty members pay attention in their courses to the links between their courses and the overall goals of the program?

  To the links between their discipline (or approach to the discipline) and others?

  Do they encourage students to take multidisciplinary courses and courses in other fields that extend or use the techniques, ideas, or content of their field?

  Does the program offer opportunities for interdisciplinary courses, seminars, or projects?

- How does the program curriculum interface with the general-education curriculum?

  Do intermediate and advanced courses in the program utilize the knowledge that students bring to these courses from general-education courses?

  Do courses in the program attend to the social, political, and ethical issues associated with the field?

  Are there opportunities for students to connect what they are learning in the program with the wider issues of liberal learning and with issues that are important to them personally?

  Does the program provide opportunities for students to engage in a process of generalizing that reaches beyond the confines of the discipline and into a broader context?

■ How does the program connect with the lives of students?

Does the program actively seek to learn about the characteristics of its students?

Is there evidence that the program is responsive to changes in those characteristics?

In particular, is there a regular effort to assess the academic preparation that students bring into the program?

Is there a regular effort to determine the students' aspirations, beliefs, and expectations with respect to the program?

Is there evidence that the faculty members are aware of these findings and acknowledge them in their courses?

Has the program as a whole responded to these findings?

TEACHING QUALITY

For students, learning in the major means learning to take part in a continuing exploration. The role of faculty members is to provide structures and languages that support this participation....

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 4

Strong programs are taught by faculty members who place a high priority on the quality of their teaching. Teaching quality involves much more than performance in the classroom. It includes attending to the needs of students with a diversity of interests, backgrounds, and learning styles. It includes interacting with students both inside and outside the classroom in relation to the overarching learning goals of the undergraduate academic experience as well as to the goals of a particular course or program. It includes staying current on recent research in teaching and learning, and it includes a willingness to alter teaching styles on the basis of the results of that research. It includes responsibility for addressing the shared goals of the overall program in planning courses and in giving feedback to students on their work and progress.

■ How does the program encourage high-quality teaching?

Are incentives and rewards (such as teaching awards, salary increases, funds to attend conferences on teaching) provided to promote and recognize excellence in teaching?

Are there mechanisms for mentoring new and temporary faculty members in the art of teaching and in local customs and expectations?

Are there mechanisms to assist experienced faculty members who wish to improve their teaching?

If graduate students teach in the program, are they well trained and well supervised?

- How does the program evaluate teaching?
  Are teaching dossiers, peer evaluations, student evaluations, and reviews of syllabi included in the evaluation process?
  Are teaching evaluations taken into account in making teaching assignments?
  In promotion and tenure decisions?
  Are procedures in place to provide counseling for faculty members whose teaching is recognized to be effective for many students?
- Who in the program is cognizant of research in teaching and learning?
  Are these individuals a resource for other faculty members?
  Are there regular occasions (such as faculty meetings, seminars, or brown-bag lunches) for discussing teaching strategies and teaching issues?
- Do faculty members in the program utilize a variety of teaching techniques?
  Are there opportunities for collaborative learning, supervised peer teaching, and independent study?
- How, and how often, do students receive feedback in their courses?
  What form does the feedback take?
  Are there opportunities for students to revise and resubmit their work?

ADVISING

> *It is... useful to think about the major in terms of the appropriately social metaphor of "home".... [T]he major program provides a "home" for learning: a community of peers with whom students can undertake collaborative inquiries and a faculty charged to care about students' intellectual and personal explorations as well as their maturation.*
>
> THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 4

Advising must be more than monitoring students to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress toward a degree, and it must be more than suggesting choices among possible options. Quality advising includes discussing goals and expectations: of the program, of the institution, and of the student. It includes discussing opportunities in the field and strategies for achieving students' goals both during and after their program of study. It includes discussing the relationship among courses in the program and between the program and general education.

High-quality advising is built upon knowing each student's background, beliefs, hopes, and expectations. Ideally, advising is an interactive process that makes a definite contribution to the student's education, informs faculty members about students' concerns, and results in a shared understanding of a plan or plans of action that will serve well the needs of the student.

- How are students in the program advised?
  - Does each student meet on a regular basis with a faculty member to discuss the student's plans and progress?
  - Do these discussions include attention to questions that transcend the requirements of the program (such as the rationale for the program, the culture of the field, the totality of the undergraduate experience, and student goals and expectations)?
- Are there also less formal opportunities for faculty/student interaction?
  - Are there student clubs, seminars, or interest groups associated with the program?
  - Do program faculty members support these activities?
- Is advising valued in the program?
  - Are all faculty members expected to participate?
  - If advising is the responsibility of only a few faculty members, are these few provided with sufficient time for regular one-on-one interactions with students?
  - Is the knowledge that advisers gain about the characteristics of students shared with all faculty members in the program?
  - Does it influence the way the program is structured and the way the courses are taught?

INCLUSIVENESS

What is required of each institution and each field is a strong affirmation of the educational benefits of diversity and a continuing faculty dialogue about the ways initiatory [and continuing] experiences in a field can contribute to, and lay the foundations for, the widest range of students to achieve success.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 18

It no longer is enough to make simple adjustments to accommodate students who traditionally have been discouraged from study in a field. Institutions and programs must rethink the way they function relative to these students and undertake comprehensive and sustained change efforts. Plans for change, to be effective, must include assessment and accountability measures

- What are the program's goals for enhancing diversity?
  - What do institutional data indicate about the entry and graduation rates of groups of students underrepresented in the field?
  - What are the plans to correct any disparities in recruitment and retention of different groups?

Are the current accountability measures successful in ensuring progress in attaining goals?

Who is assigned responsibility for monitoring and reporting on progress?

■ Does the program assess which courses critically influence students' decisions on whether or not to major in the program?

Do these courses enroll a reasonable percentage of students from groups underrepresented in the field?

Do these students stay in the major at the same rate as other students?

If these students leave the program in large numbers, why do they leave?

■ What efforts have been made to identify and remove barriers—such as a climate that communicates to underrepresented groups that their participation is not welcome, that their success in the field is unlikely, or that the field does not value their perspectives and experiences—that may impede entry or success in the program by specific groups of students?

Have issues of diverse goals, expectations, learning styles, and experiences been considered in planning and implementing courses in the program?

Does the program sponsor workshops for faculty members on climate issues, including topics such as the dynamics of difference in the classroom, stereotyping and bias, or teaching and learning styles?

■ Is the faculty of the program diverse, representing appropriately the availability of faculty members from underrepresented groups?

If not, has the program evaluated and addressed inequities in recruiting, hiring, promotion, tenure, and salary of faculty members?

Has the program evaluated policies and procedures for disparate impact?

■ If an imbalance persists after extensive efforts have been made to recruit and retain faculty members from underrepresented groups, does the program nonetheless demonstrate to students diversity among professionals in the field, both in perspectives on critical issues in the field and in sex, race, and ethnicity?

■ Have faculty members in the program explored the potential benefit of alliances with units on campus that serve diverse groups of students, such as American ethnic studies, women's studies, minority student affairs, or the women's center?

Does the program sponsor events that highlight the contributions to the field of people of diverse cultures and characteristics?

Does the program sponsor clubs; student focus groups; and advising, mentoring, and mediating services for diverse groups of students?

■ Where appropriate, does the program assess its curriculum for the inclusion of relevant new scholarship about women and minorities?

Do faculty members participate in seminars, workshops, or professional meetings to develop expertise in this material?

Have efforts to incorporate new scholarship in their courses been successful?

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Collegial leadership... deserves and requires full institutional support from presidents and academic administrators. What are needed in the long run are institutional environments that build a sense of common enterprise and institutional priorities that recognize the integral connections between work in the major and overarching goals for liberal learning.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 21

Strong programs are supported by chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents who value the teaching activities of their faculty members. Administrative support for teaching includes more than access to copy machines, well-equipped classrooms, and laboratory and library facilities. It includes support for course and curriculum development, faculty development, course and teacher evaluation, assessment, and travel to meetings and conferences that focus on curriculum or teaching. It includes promotion and tenure policies that recognize the importance of excellent teaching, advising, research in teaching and learning, and creative activities that enhance quality teaching. In concert with program reviews, administrators at all levels should examine critically their own contributions to creating an institutional environment that is supportive of good teaching.

- What is the track record of the program and the institution in encouraging, rewarding, and promoting excellent teaching?

  What mechanisms are utilized for these purposes?

  Do faculty members describe the atmosphere as one that values teaching and teaching-related activities?

  Is there evidence that teaching excellence is an important factor in promotion and tenure decisions?
- How do the institution and the program orient new faculty members?

  Do the orientations include attention to teaching?
- Are faculty development activities available for faculty members at all levels?

  Are ongoing workshops or seminars on teaching provided for teaching assistants?
- What curriculum development activities have been undertaken recently in the program?

  Were they adequately supported?

  Have they resulted in documentable improvements in the program?
- Are funds available to support assessment and evaluation activities?

  Are these funds well spent?
- Is there evidence that research in teaching and learning, course development, advising, and other teaching-related activities are valued in the program and in the institution?

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Corporate attention to the ways in which a major works as a total program, rather than as a set of discrete (and often disparate) courses, can establish a series of points at which faculty members both assess and support students' continuing progress in the field.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING LEARNING, 18–19

Every academic program is designed to achieve certain goals. Ultimately, the quality of the program must be judged on how well it achieves those goals. Faculty members' perceptions and anecdotal evidence are not sufficient; evidence on the quality of the teaching process is not sufficient. What is necessary is evidence that the intended outcomes of the program are realized. The key questions are: What are the goals, or intended outcomes, of the program? To what extent are these being achieved?

Strong programs have designed assessment processes to answer these questions. These processes judge the outcomes of the program as a whole rather than the outcomes of a single course or the performance of an individual instructor or the achievements of particular students. Assessment is intended to document the successes of the program; flag areas in which goals are not being met satisfactorily; and, ultimately, lead to improvements in the program. Ideally, many of the assessment processes also will have direct educational value for students.

- What are the intended educational outcomes of the program?
  - What processes are in place for measuring the achievements of these outcomes?
  - Do the processes provide several kinds of information about student learning and achievement?
  - Do these processes reflect faculty discussion and decisions about the kinds of evidence appropriate to their program's goals, strengths, and emphases?
- Are the assessment procedures adopted by the program linked to program goals and curricular priorities?
  - Do faculty members periodically discuss the results of assessment in relation to program goals?
  - Do they use assessment evidence in making judgments about curriculum development and revisions?
- Does assessment provide opportunities for students to reflect on their progress to the program? To integrate different parts of their learning?
  - Do students who take part in assessment activities receive feedback on their performance?
  - Is there a culture that invites students to take assessment seriously as a milestone in their learning and intellectual development?

- If assessment examinations and assignments are locally developed, are faculty members given release time or other compensation to design them?
  - Who is involved in making judgments about the outcomes of assessment?
  - Who uses the results?
  - Do faculty members in the program confer with peers in comparable programs in reviewing the outcomes of assessment activities?
  - Are there opportunities for students to discuss assessment outcomes in relation to their experience in the program?
- To what extent are intended outcomes achieved?
  - To the extent that the intellectual outcomes are not achieved, what changes are being made either in the goals of the program or in the program itself?

CONCLUSION

This handbook suggests a general framework through which to explore the effectiveness of educational programs in the major. Those consulting it will want to adapt its specific questions to the particular concerns of their institutions and programs.

As they do this adaptation, and as they implement program review focused on educational quality, they should keep at the fore the goal of providing the best possible educational experience for the students served. Connecting the program review—as well as the program—to the needs, abilities, aspirations, experiences, and prior knowledge of students—as well as to the goals and expectations of the faculty—will provide the best opportunity for a program review to lead to improved programs. This must be the ultimate goal.

As faculty members and academic administrators work together to connect issues addressed here to their own programs and students, they shape the collegial dialogue fundamental to the effectiveness of any educational program.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

AAC publications and reports related to arts and sciences majors

The Challenge of Connecting Learning, "Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences Major," Volume One. Washington: AAC, 1991.

Volume One of the reports from AAC's three-year review of purposes and practices in arts and sciences majors, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning* proposes organizing principles adaptable to any major and calls for more dialogue among faculty members and between faculty and students, within and across fields.

Reports from the Fields, "Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences Major," Volume Two. Washington: AAC, 1991.

Volume Two, *Reports from the Fields*, contains executive summaries of the reports on their majors from twelve learned societies, and discusses important issues and needed changes in each of the following fields: biology, economics, history, mathematics, philosophy, physics, political science, psychology, religion, sociology, and women's studies, as well as interdisciplinary studies. Each review responds to an AAC "charge": a set of organizing questions about majors as liberal learning. This volume provides information on how to procure copies of the unabridged reports from the learned societies.

Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community. Washington: AAC, 1985.

Integrity proposes a minimum required program of nine essential educational experiences that ensure a liberal education for all students. It severely critiques the formlessness of major programs on many campuses.

Structure and Coherence: Measuring the Undergraduate Curriculum. Washington: AAC, 1989.

Structure and Coherence includes analyses of student transcripts from thirty undergraduate institutions and documents patterns of depth, breadth, and intellectual progression in different subject areas and in different kinds of institutions.

"Frameworks that Enhance Learning," *Liberal Education*, Volume 77, Number 2 (March/April 1991): 1–48.

This issue of AAC's bimonthly journal addresses structural changes in academic programs that enhance student learning.

Resources for good teaching and scholarship

Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

Chickering, Arthur W. and Zelda F. Gamson, eds. *Applying the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 47. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Johnson Foundation. *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. Racine, Wisc.: The Johnson Foundation, 1989.
To request a copy of *Seven Principles* and the accompanying faculty and institutional inventories, write to: The Johnson Foundation, P.O. Box 547, Racine, Wisc. 53401-0547.

"The Teacher-Course Evaluation Project" at Northeastern University offers a variety of resources for teaching improvement and evaluation. For information about the Project's course evaluation software system, questionnaires for students and instructors, and teaching handbook template, write to Jennifer Franklin, Associate Director for Evaluation, Office of Instructional Research and Evaluation, 305 C.U., Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02115, or call 617/437-4896. Although the software is not yet available for purchase, institutions with strong resources for the support of teaching may be selected as test sites.

Resources for program review and assessment

The readings listed below provide helpful perspectives on the historical and institutional contexts of the practices of program review and assessment and offer useful suggestions for different approaches to exploring students' learning and evaluating program quality.

The literature on program review, however, often reflects the major's "ethos of self-containment" explicitly challenged in this handbook and in AAC's 1991 report on the major, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*. We invite those concerned with program review to bear in mind the argument of this handbook:

"Strong programs are designed to facilitate connections: with the most recent advances in the field, with the practice of the field in life beyond the academy, with applications to other fields, with liberal learning, and—most important from the student perspective—with the needs and lives of students" (page 21).

Astin, Alexander. *Assessment for Excellence*. New York: Macmillan, 1991.

Banta, Trudy W. and Janet A. Schneider. "Using Faculty-Developed Exit Examinations to Evaluate Academic Programs." *Journal of Higher Education* 59 (January-February 1988): 69–83.

Erwin, T. Dary. *Assessing Student Learning and Development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Ewell, Peter. "To Capture the Ineffable: New Forms of Assessment in Higher Education." *Review of Research in Education* 17. Washington: American Educational Research Association, 1991.

Forrest, Aubrey. *Time Will Tell: Portfolio-Assisted Assessment for General Education*. Washington: American Association for Higher Education, 1990.

Hutchings, Patricia. "Learning Over Time: Portfolio Assessment." *AAHE Bulletin* 42 (April 1990): 6–8.

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges Council on Academic Affairs. *Statement of Principles on Student Outcomes Assessment.* Washington: NASULGC, 1988.

Wilson, Everett. "Department Review for Product Improvement in Higher Education." In *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research III*, edited by John Smart. New York: Agathon Press, 1987.

Wilson, Richard F. *Designing Academic Program Reviews.* New Directions for Higher Education, no. 10. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Assessment Update, a bimonthly journal published by Jossey-Bass, is recommended as a good source for information about current trends in program review and portfolio assessment.

Program review in the disciplines

The guidelines for educational quality review in this handbook are designed to supplement traditional approaches to program review and to give central attention to the quality of student learning. For specific fields, this handbook may be used to complement disciplinary guidelines.

Review guidelines for specific fields are available from the following learned societies:

American Association of Physics Teachers
5112 Berwyn Road
College Park, MD 20740-4100

American Chemical Society
Committee on Professional Training
1155 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Institute of Biological Sciences
730 11th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001–4584

American Political Science Association
1527 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Sociological Association
ASA Teaching Resources Center
1722 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Association of Departments of English
10 Astor Place
New York, NY 10003

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1818 R Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
20009

The Association of American Colleges is the only institutional membership higher education association whose primary mission is improving undergraduate liberal education. AAC's goals—promoting lifelong humane and liberal learning, strengthening institutions of higher education as settings for liberal learning, and extending the benefits of liberal learning to all—are carried out through research, projects, publications, and workshops.

AAC's programs reflect its commitment to enhancing public understanding of liberal learning, strengthening general and specialized curricula, improving teaching and learning, increasing opportunities for equity and achievement, and developing institutional and academic leadership. Founded in 1915, AAC comprises more than 640 public and private colleges and universities.

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